

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the new prior art reference cited by the Examiner on April 8, 2004 by phone U.S. Pat. No. 6,656,432 to Hirota et al. (hereinafter "Hirota"). Applicants sincerely thank the Examiner for taking the time to conduct the phone interview.

Hirota teaches "*to pre-fill a cavity with a buffer solution ..., then pour a sample into the cavity through an inlet port while laminar-flow-replacing with the sample, ... to determine the completion of laminar flow replacement of the sample in the cavity by detecting the change of fluid characteristics in the cavity* (col. 7, lines 31-40)." The Examiner indicated that although Hirota does not specify the gravity difference between the buffer solution and the sample solution, its teachings imply so. However, Hirota does not teach using liquid paraffin or mineral oil as the buffer solution. Applicants' representative suggested specifying the third solution as an initial adjustment solution (p. 10, last paragraph), and a step of using it as in the above-mentioned claim amendment. The Examiner agreed that the proposed amendment appears to overcome Hirota.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due reconsideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

Claims 4-5, 8-11 are under consideration in this application. Claims 4 and 9 are being amended, as set forth above in the marked-up presentation of the claim amendments, in order to more particularly define and distinctly claim Applicants' invention.

Additional Amendments

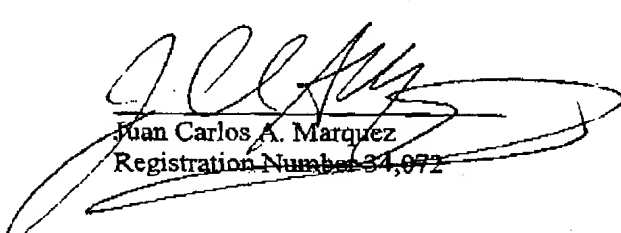
The claims are being amended to correct formal errors and/or to better disclose or describe the features of the present invention as claimed. Applicants hereby submit that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

In view of all the above, clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art reference upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely. Applicants respectfully contend that the prior art references cannot anticipate the present invention or render the present invention obvious. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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